

By Herbert Aptheker:

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The Negro in the Abolitionist Movement (1941)
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The World of C. Wright Mills



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fare—have not been used indiscriminately, except against darker peoples (the British using germ warfare against the North American Indians; Mussolini using mustard gas against the Ethiopians), with the exception of their usage, in somewhat limited forms, during World War I. In World War II these weapons, possessed by both sides, were used by neither, though so far as Hitler and Mussolini were concerned the war was pressed home to a final decision.

It is also relevant to recall that in wars fought since the end of World War II atomic weapons have not been used, although serious pressure for their use was exerted in both the Korean and the Indochinese wars. The use of the atomic weapon twice against the Japanese carried with it no chance of retaliation, was aimed "only" at colored peoples, and had in it the aspect of an anti-Soviet demonstration.* It is by no means certain that it would ever have

* Some documentation of this point may be useful. Prior to the employment of the atomic bomb, an Interim Committee of scientific advisers, established by Secretary of War Stimson, advised the prompt and sudden use of the bomb in war. Other scientists, headed by Professor James Franck, formed their own Committee on Social and Political Implications and urged the authorities that the bomb be tested publicly first and that then, after its enormous destructive powers were known, an ultimatum be served on Japan.

The bomb was first tested secretly on July 16, 1945, and, of course, successfully. By this time the United States knew that Japan was seriously considering suing for peace and that she would do so very soon. At Yalta the Russians were told nothing. The date for the Russian entry, as per promise, into the war against Japan was Aug. 8, 1945; on Aug. 6, 1945 the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, and on Aug. 9, 1945, another bomb was dropped upon Nagasaki.

Norman Cousins and T. K. Finletter wrote on this matter in *The Saturday Review of Literature* on June 15, 1946. They stated that the U.S. had to reject the Franck Committee proposal: "No, any test would have been impossible if the purpose was to knock Japan out before Russia came in . . . or at least before Russia could make anything other than a token of participation prior to Japanese collapse." Cousins and Finletter went on to say that the atomic bombings might be defended on the grounds "that we avoided a struggle for authority in Japan similar to what we have experienced in Germany and Italy, that unless we came out of the war with a decisive balance of power over Russia, we would be in no position to checkmate Russian expansion."

Professor P. M. S. Blackett, the distinguished British scientist, in his book *Fear, War, and the Bomb* (New York, 1949, pp. 135-139), elaborates on this matter and declares that the atomic bombing of Hiroshima was the first shot in the Cold War.

Henry L. Stimson in his own memoirs (*On Active Service*, New York, 1948, pp.

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been used in Europe, even had World War II lasted a good deal longer; and it is not likely that Hitler would have used it had he finally gotten it and known that it was possessed by his foes. That is to say, not only have significant wars been fought since World War II without recourse to atomic weapons but it seems at least possible that, even with atomic weapons in the hands of both sides, in Europe, neither would have employed these against the other, just as neither employed the highly lethal weapons of poison gas and germs.

It is true that since World War II the major powers, and particularly the United States, have remade their whole military strategy and have transformed much of their military machines into instruments suited for nuclear warfare and therefore, to a degree, unsuited for "conventional" warfare. But this is true only to a degree; it is not true to the point where present possible belligerents could not give a very good account of themselves and inflict many millions of casualties without recourse to nuclear or atomic weapons. Since it is certainly physically possible for major war to be conducted today between the great powers of the world without recourse to unconventional weapons, it is clearly not beyond the realm of possibility that this might happen. Mills's dismissal of this possibility—he does not even consider it—is faulty and to that degree invalidates his basic theme. It is also entirely possible that atomic weapons confined to the tactical level might be used and no more lethal means of destruction employed; while this would enormously increase the number of casualties, it is a

(637-638) called the atomic bombings in Japan "a badly needed 'equalizer' in the diplomatic struggle with the U.S.S.R." Professor Richard N. Current in his biography, *Secretary Stimson: A Study in Statecraft* (Rutgers University Press, 1954, p. 237), finds that Stimson "did indeed hint that Russia and not Japan was the real target of the atom bomb." It is relevant to point out that no justification has been offered for the dropping of the second bomb on Nagasaki. The order to drop it did not come from the President or the Secretary of State, but rather from the theater commanders. Fortunately, at the time, the United States possessed but two bombs; had there been three or four, presumably additional Japanese cities might have been "experimented" with, and additional scores of thousands of civilians might then have been slaughtered. See, on this, Michael Amrine, *The Great Decision* (Simon & Schuster, N.Y., 1959).